

## **Transcript of teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi**

**Lesson No: 12**

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During the course of studying this topic, the mind and its functions, there may be times when you do not understand the terminologies or know the way you are supposed to approach this subject. If your mind gets very uptight because of not understanding the terminologies or their meanings, I would say that that is not right. At such times, you must know how to relax the mind, making it a little bit more open and expansive.

It seems that there are people who are getting stressed, upset, and unhappy during the process of studying this topic. It is possible that you will then start to entertain doubts and ask yourself, “Why am I doing this?”

In the process of learning anything in life, when you feel uptight, you must loosen up a bit. On the other hand, when you become too relaxed, you need to tighten up a bit. This not only applies to studying *Lorig* but to anything you may study in life. This should be your approach. My purpose of saying this is so that you will not become crazy from studying *Lorig*. If you think that you will definitely become crazy by studying this subject, I will be the first one to become crazy!

*Khen Rinpoche: My point is that there is no need to worry. Simply put effort into your studies.*

*You may know of this famous example: when you play the guitar, if the strings are too tight, then the sound would not be good and pleasing. On the other hand, when the strings are too tight, they may snap. It is exactly the same with your studies when you are too relaxed or too uptight.*

*If you think you are getting too stressed, then relax a little. But if you think you are too relaxed, then you need to put in a bit more effort. Remember the above example, which applies to whatever you do, even in business. You shouldn't be too hard on yourself. When that happens, you must loosen up.*

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### **Establishing the existence of existents**

Remember we had looked at an established base that is mutually inclusive with an existent in the beginning of this module. What then is an existent? It is that which is observed by a valid cogniser. So an established base is established by a valid cogniser.

That was what we had looked at in the beginning. How many weeks have passed since then? It has been at least a couple of weeks, right? Now when you hear the same words again, is there any difference in your understanding? At least now you have some idea. There are some meaning generalities appearing in your mind. This is a sign of having learnt something.

*Khen Rinpoche: There is no other realisation. That is the realisation!*

The definition of an existent is that which is observed by a valid cogniser. Essentially what does that mean? What is it that distinguishes an existent from a non-existent and determines whether a phenomenon is an existent or not? When a particular phenomenon is observed or comprehended by a valid cogniser, that phenomenon is said to exist. Otherwise it does not exist.

“Observed by a valid cogniser”: here “observed” means realised, i.e. it is realised by a valid cogniser. Therefore in order for it to be an existent, it has to be realised by a valid cogniser.

The definition does not say, “appearing to a valid cogniser,” i.e., just because the phenomenon appears to a valid cogniser, it does not mean that you can say that it definitely exists. As I have mentioned before, whatever appears to your mind does not mean it exists. This is because there can be all sorts of both valid and invalid appearances.

The criterion for a phenomenon to exist is that there is a valid cogniser realising it. If there is a valid cogniser realising it, that phenomenon is then said to exist. It is an existent. Otherwise it is a non-existent. This was established from the very beginning. You have to be clear about that.

When the phenomenon is realised or comprehended by a valid cogniser, that phenomenon exists. From this you can see that a valid cogniser definitely has to exist.

### **Establishing the existence of valid cognisers**

The next logical question is: how do we know whether a valid cogniser exists or not? Just as an existent is verified by a valid cogniser, what then verifies the existence of a valid cogniser?

The self-knower is posited to verify the existence of a valid cogniser. A self-knower is the mind that exists in one collection together with the valid cogniser that it is experiencing. The valid cogniser cannot be verified by something that is of a different collection from the valid cogniser that is being verified.

- What verifies an existent? A valid cogniser verifies an existent so a valid cogniser has to exist.

- What then verifies the existence of a valid cogniser? It is the self-knower, the mind that exists in one collection with the valid cogniser that it is experiencing.

The self-knower that verifies the existence of a valid cogniser *cannot* be another valid cogniser that is of a different collection from the valid cogniser that it is verifying. It is problematic if you were to posit a separate valid cogniser verifying the existence of a valid cogniser. This is because you would then need another mind to verify this valid cogniser. There would be no end to this and you will incur the fallacy of infinite regression.

This is one of the reasons why those who assert self-knowers arrive at the conclusion that self-knowers exist. Although the assertion of self-knowers is not the final view nor do they exist in reality, nevertheless those who assert self-knowers do so because of the above reason.

*Question:* Since the Sutra School asserts that external phenomena exist from their own side, would that not mean that you do not really need a valid cogniser to establish their existence because they are already inherently existing from their own side?

*Answer:* This school does assert external objects but whether it is an external object or not, it is ultimately dependent on a valid cogniser to posit the external object.

*Question:* If there are no valid cognisers, will there still be existents?

*Answer:* No.

*Question:* Setting aside the definition, how then should one understand the meaning of being established by itself, that it is self-established?

*Answer:* It is established because it is realised by a valid cogniser. It is established to exist by way of its own character.

*Question:* An external phenomenon is established by itself?

*Answer:* In this system, every phenomenon exists by way of its own character. When you think about the definition, what it means is that its existence has to be posited by a valid cogniser.

*Question:* With regard to the relationship between an apprehender and the apprehended and the aspect of the apprehender and the aspect of the apprehended, for a self-knower experiencing the eye consciousness apprehending blue, blue is the apprehended and both the self-knower and the eye consciousness apprehending blue are apprehenders because they are both apprehending something. May I say the following:

1. The self-knower experiencing the eye consciousness is the apprehender having the aspect of the apprehender.
2. The eye consciousness apprehending blue is the apprehender having the aspect of the apprehended?

*Answer:* If you are referring to the apprehended object, it is blue.

*Question:* The self-knower experiences an eye consciousness apprehending blue. These two parts are of one collection. Within these two parts there are two apprehenders: (1) the self-knower and (2) the eye consciousness apprehending blue.

The eye consciousness apprehending blue itself is an apprehender having the aspect of blue. Therefore it is an apprehender having the aspect of being generated into the aspect of the apprehended, the object blue. Can I say that it is the apprehender having the aspect of the apprehended?

*Answer:* If you are referring to the eye consciousness apprehending blue, the eye consciousness is the apprehender. This eye consciousness is generated into the aspect of blue. It has the aspect of the apprehended. Blue is the apprehended.

*Question:* Can I summarise this into one sentence: it is an apprehender generated into the aspect of the apprehended?

*Answer:* The eye consciousness apprehending blue is the apprehender. In this context, the apprehended is the object blue. You can say: the eye consciousness apprehending blue is generated into the aspect of the apprehended.

*Question:* Is it all right to say: it is an apprehender generated into the aspect of the apprehended?

*Answer:* The meaning is fine but whether we can say it like that, that is another question. I don't think it is taught in such a way.

*Student:* If that is the case, then there is no need to talk about the self-knower. There is also no need to say: it is an apprehender generated into the aspect of the apprehender.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Is there such a need? The self-knower has the aspect of the apprehender.

*Question:* Is it not in itself also an apprehender?

*Answer:* In general when we talked about the apprehended and the apprehender, the apprehended refers to the object and the apprehender refers to the subject. If it is an established base, it is necessarily an object. Therefore the apprehended refers to the object. The apprehender,

the consciousness or the subject, is also the apprehended.

In general, when we talk about the apprehender and the apprehended, we are referring to the two-fold divisions of object and object possessor. The apprehended refers to the object. The apprehender refers to the subject, consciousness. When the subject, consciousness, is divided, there is the self-knower and the other-knower. This is a division of consciousness, not a division of the object.

- An eye consciousness apprehending blue would have the aspect of the apprehended.
- The self-knower experiencing an eye consciousness apprehending blue would have the aspect of the apprehender.

*Question:* If a tree fell in a forest and no one hears the sound of that tree falling, does that sound exist?

*Answer:* If there is no valid cogniser realising the sound of the tree falling, then you have to say that the sound of the tree falling does not exist.

What decides and how do we know whether a phenomenon exists or not? Do you accept that for a phenomenon to exist, it depends on whether it is verified by a valid cogniser?

*Khen Rinpoche:* You must either accept or not accept this position. If you don't accept it, you have to give a reason. If you accept that, then is no problem. The answer is already given.

Just because a tree fell in an uninhabited area, it does not necessarily mean that there isn't any valid cogniser realising that sound because there are ants, worms, spirits, gods, and nagas around. Some of them may even be crushed by the tree! Valid cognisers are not necessarily present only in the continua of human beings.

*Khen Rinpoche:* Some of them may be valid cognisers hearing the sound of the tree falling. You do not need human beings to be there.

*Student:* When we do not tune in to the radio frequency where we can hear a song, that does not mean the song is not there. In fact the song is there all the while but it is only when we tune in that we can hear the song.

*Khen Rinpoche:* This student is saying that the song exists regardless of whether there is a valid cogniser or not. I would have to disagree.

The first thing you have to get is this: the existence of an existent is completely dependent on a valid cogniser verifying it. Just because there is an object out there, does it mean that it exists? How does it exist? If no one says it exists, how does it exist?

In the first place, when there is no valid cognition, how can you even say whether there is sound or there is no sound? Even to say that there is no sound, you need a valid cogniser.

*Khen Rinpoche: There are different views here. (This student) says it is not necessary for there to be a valid cogniser. I am saying there must be a valid cogniser. You need to think about this.*

*Question:* A human being apprehends a glass of water as water, a hungry ghost apprehends it as pus and blood, and a god apprehends it as nectar. Whose view is the most correct? Are they all mistaken?

*Answer:* We would have to say that all three are valid cognisers when we look at this issue of a human being, a hungry ghost, and a god seeing a glass of water as water, pus and blood, and nectar respectively.

When we look at this from the perspective of the higher tenets, it is easier to understand the reason and to accept that all three are valid in their own way.

When you talk about this from the perspective of the MOS, their assertion is that everything is in the nature of the mind. From that perspective, it can be said that these three are valid cognisers.

When you go to the highest school, the CMWS, where they assert that everything is merely imputed by the mind, then (the validity of these three) is quite clear.

But when you talk about the lower tenets, you need to analyse whether they assert that all three are valid or not.

These three different appearances are not said to exist just because there are such appearances. Simply because something *appears* as pus, that does not necessarily mean it *is* pus. The reason why the beings of these three different realms have these three different experiences is due to the karma that they have accumulated respectively, causing them to have those particular appearances.

For human beings, the fluid appears as water. It is water because it is established by their karma, resulting in this karmic appearance. Therefore that experience of water for human beings is valid. If you were to say that it is invalid, the entire presentation of cause and effect will fall apart.

It is the same as thinking whether the sufferings of the hungry ghost realm and the hell realms exist or not. These sufferings are said to exist because there is the karma that is accumulated for such sufferings to occur. When you do not consider the cause, karma, how then are you going to posit the existence of such sufferings?

It is a complicated issue. We have to think about it. When we look at it from the view of the MOS where it is asserted that everything is in the nature of the mind, it is something to think about. Due to the mind of a specific individual, a particular appearance arises. But when we relate this to the assertion of an external object that exists from its own side, the issue becomes a little difficult.

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### **Facsimiles of a Direct Perceiver**

In the last class, we looked at a facsimile of a direct perceiver. For a non-conceptual facsimile of a direct perceiver, there are causes of errors that are external and internal. The four causes of errors are used to explain how non-conceptual facsimiles of a direct perceiver which are sense consciousnesses are produced.

There are also non-conceptual facsimiles of a direct perceiver that are mental consciousnesses. An illustration of this is a dream elephant appearing as an elephant.

Our appropriated contaminated physical and mental aggregates, in particular the contaminated physical body is by nature unclean, but we instinctively apprehend it to be clean. This mind is a mistaken mind.

Is the mind that apprehends the contaminated physical body to be clean a valid cogniser or a wrong consciousness?

Conventionally speaking we say that the body is clean once we have washed it. Due to that we apprehend the body to be clean. Because of this conventional designation that the body is clean after one has taken a bath, is such a mind a valid mind or a mistaken mind? If you say that this is a mistaken consciousness, how does it come about and what is its cause?

Similarly, it is conventionally accepted that when one is able to get a pleasant and desirable object, one will be happy. Is this mind that experiences happiness a valid consciousness or a mistaken consciousness? Is such mind a valid mind or a wrong consciousness?

When we saw someone yesterday and we see the same person again today, we feel that it is the same person. Based on what appears to us, i.e., the shape and colour have not changed, we think the person of yesterday and the person of today is exactly the same person. Is this mind a valid mind or a wrong consciousness? This is another point for you to analyse.

How do you feel when you see the same person on two consecutive days? Do you feel that there are two different persons? You will never feel that there are two different persons.

When we accept reincarnation, we accept that a person moves from life to life. We have to posit that definitely there is a person who comes from a previous life into this life and who is going to move on to the next life. It is the same person who moves from life to life. It cannot be a different person. It is possible for us to believe that this person is permanent. It is the same unchanging person. It is not a different person.

If you were to say that these are two different persons, then the person who created the cause and the person who is experiencing the result would be different. For us, it is definitely the same unchanging person who goes on from life to life. We have to analyse whether such a conception is correct or not.

Just as the non-conceptual facsimiles of a direct perceiver that are sense consciousnesses are produced in dependence upon the four causes of errors, in the same way, the four examples that I had brought up can be related to the four attributes of the first noble truth, true suffering: (1) impermanent, (2) suffering or misery, (3) empty, and (4) selfless.

These four attributes of true suffering definitely exist. What are their opposites? There are conceptions holding on to the opposite of these four attributes. You need to understand how, on the one hand, there are mistaken conceptions and, on the other hand, there are conceptions that realise reality as it is.

From this you can see that what we have covered is related with our own practice. Therefore it is very important for us to understand the difference between a valid mind and a mistaken mind. It is through giving in to these wrong consciousnesses and believing in them that we encounter problems, sufferings, and all the things that we don't want in life. It is through following the valid mind that we get happiness as its result. So it is extremely important to distinguish between a valid mind and a wrong consciousness.

### **Subsequent Cognisers**

The definition of a subsequent cogniser is a knower that realises what has already been realised. It is not simply knowing that it is the second moment of an eye consciousness apprehending a vase or that the first moment is a valid cogniser and the subsequent moment is the subsequent cogniser. That is not the main point.

The main point is that you have to familiarise yourself over and over again with what you have already understood and realised. That process of familiarisation has to continue until the mind is transformed into a mind that has a very clear appearance of the object that it has already realised. In some cases, the mind is transformed into the entity of direct perception. This is what you have to understand from the definition of a subsequent cogniser.



**Correctly assuming consciousness**

A correctly assuming consciousness is a factually concordant determinative knower that is convertible with regard to determining its object. Is it sufficient just to have a correct belief or a correct assumption? No, because whatever imprints that are planted in the mind due to a correct belief, until you have ascertained the object by completely removing all doubts and superimpositions pertaining to it, the imprints will be unstable. It is not a realisation. You cannot be satisfied with that.

In order to be able to place very strong and stable imprints in your mind, you have to work towards a valid cognition of the object. When you are able to do that, then the imprints in your mind will be very stable.

Is this not related to your practice? Whatever practice you are doing, it will make a huge difference when you have gained complete certainty and ascertainment having removed all doubts and superimpositions. The practice will then come naturally without the need for someone to push you to do it. This is because you have gained conviction and certainty with regard to your practice.

**Doubting consciousness**

A doubting consciousness is a knower that has qualms two-pointedly by its own power. Can you imagine trying to do your practice with doubts in your mind? Nothing will work. It is an obstacle to your practice. When there are doubts, you won't even get started on your practice. They are huge obstacles to you entering the path.

A doubting consciousness has two divisions: (1) doubts that are beneficial and (2) doubts that are not beneficial.

Here we are talking about the doubting consciousness that is an obstacle to our practice and generating the path. When we have doubts from the very beginning, it is an obstacle that prevents us from engaging in the path. The majority of us are practising at this level. Our practice will go nowhere with mere belief. By not eliminating all our doubts and superimpositions, there will be no ascertainment. This will not lead us to any realisations.

Having a correctly assuming consciousness alone is also not enough even though it is better than doubt. You have to transform your mind into a valid cogniser. But just transforming your mind into a valid cogniser is also not enough. You have to transform it into a direct valid cogniser so that you can directly perceive the object in question. With that kind of valid cognition, whatever practice you do becomes easy. The quality becomes very good.

Read up on the inferential valid cogniser in your Handout No. 7 dated 24 July 2012, particularly the presentation of a correct reason and what constitutes a correct sign.

*Student:* The impermanence of blue is not form. Therefore it cannot be the appearing object of the eye consciousness apprehending form.

*Khen Rinpoche:* If it appears to a direct perceiver, it is necessarily the appearing object. It is in the Sunday discussion questions. No one said that if it appears to a sense direct perceiver, it necessarily has to be a visible form. Whatever appears to an eye consciousness is not necessarily visible form but all the qualities that are in one collection with the object. Think about this: if it appears to an eye consciousness, it is not necessarily visible form.

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